

RUNNYMEDE ACCESS LIAISON GROUP

ACCESS APPRAISAL

Date: 16 September 2006

Savill Gardens and Visitor Centre

Present: Jonathan Fisher, Jo Wright, Mark Silver, Pat and Edna Brown, Laura Cowie

Apologies: Brian Relph

Priority A = Essential & Urgent
 B = Urgent
 C = Required
 D = Optional

Location	Priority & Action
<p><u>Visitor Centre</u></p> <p>The Group made themselves known to the management and toured the buildings and gardens. All the public areas and the conference room were inspected.</p> <p>Parking and entrance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Signage from the road to the car park was not clear. No specialised Disabled Access signs or taxi access signs were noted.2. A total of 12 disabled parking bays were provided in the car park, within close proximity to the main entrance.3. The paving on the approach to the main entrance was found to have been completed. Earlier concerns about gaps between the paving sets were allayed. There were no gaps or trip hazards found outside on the pedestrian entrance.4. The sensor-opening automatic entrance doors were welcomed by the Group.5. Immediately inside the main entrance, a fire extinguisher had not been properly placed in its plastic retainer. This could have been a trip hazard.6. Once inside the main building, the large clear space presented no directional clue to a visually impaired person (VIP), which was found to be disorientating. Stronger colour contrasting is recommended to provide clear way-marking for VIPs.7. It was noted and welcomed that the front reception desk incorporated a lowered section for wheelchair users.	<p>A</p> <p>B</p> <p>A</p>

<p>Disabled toilet:</p> <p>8. From the main entrance hall, locating the toilets was not possible without sight. There were no tactile labels on the corner of the passageway leading to the toilets.</p> <p>9. The signs on the Ladies, Gents and Baby and Disabled toilets were not tactile.</p> <p>10. In the disabled toilet, the seat was found to be too low for easy transfer to and from a wheelchair and for a semi-ambulant person. The toilet seat was already insecure and broken at the hinge, perhaps caused by someone falling onto the seat.</p> <p>Ladies toilets:</p> <p>11. Once again, the toilets were found to be very low, which may cause difficulties for the elderly or people with weak leg muscles.</p> <p>Retail area:</p> <p>12. In the retail area, the lighting did not make movement easy for VIPs, causing disorientation.</p> <p>13. Within the indoor plant section, the pavers had large groves between them causing difficulties for wheelchair users, and need filling.</p> <p>Conference Room:</p> <p>14. The Conference Room had two separate entrances, one with steps, the other with a ramp. The leading edges of the steps require contrasting strips.</p> <p>15. There was no discernible tactile labelling to identify the accessible route, either on the doors themselves, or from the main entrance.</p> <p>16. The access ramp was of an acceptable gradient and easy to use.</p> <p>17. There appeared to be projection and audio facilities for lecture purposes, but it was not clear if inductive loop audio facilities were in place.</p> <p>Refreshment Area and Terrace:</p> <p>18. Movement around the restaurant area was found to be easy for wheelchair users, and the serveries were of a good height.</p> <p>19. The terrace was equally easy for mobility impaired people, but the muted colours and materials, and lack of strong colour contrasting meant that the area was disorienting for VIPs.</p> <p>20. No colour contrasting was provided between the path and the areas of stones along the terrace, presenting a trip hazard for VIPs.</p>	<p>A</p> <p>A</p> <p>B</p> <p>B</p> <p>B</p> <p>B</p> <p>A</p> <p>A</p> <p>B</p> <p>B</p> <p>B</p> <p>A</p>
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The Gardens

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| 21. On the way to the garden, there were a number of cobbled recesses which surrounded the main support girders. There was a small but significant height difference. This could present a hazard if someone did not see the drop. | A |
| 22. Once outside, on the viewing area approach, the retaining rope above the 18 inch or so drop to a shrubbery border was not solidly fixed. Because the intermediate supporting posts to the thick rope were not securely planted, this could also be a hazard. | A |
| 23. The higher wooden and metal reinforced rail was a confident and comforting support. | |
| 24. Once through the control gate, the paths were well laid. | |
| 25. One rather winding set of steps was complemented by a zigzag path of gentler grade. The wooden edges to the steps were easily detectable. | |
| 26. On one bridge there was no border strip to prevent a roller equipped white stick or normal walking stick from going off the edge. | A |
| 27. All the paths seemed well laid, the grass paths had a number of tree root obstacles, but this is to be expected in a garden of this nature. | |
| 28. The Summer House or Gazebo had two steps along its entire frontage. No wheelchair user could gain easy access to this either to shelter from rain or strong sunshine. | B |
| 29. Some small wheelchair symbols were noted on the return route. | |

Conclusions and Recommendations

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| 30. The overall ambience of the visitor centre was good, but the signing and some details of the design gave cause for concern. Both the visitor centre and gardens offer a high level of mobility for wheelchair users or ambulant disabled people, which is to be commended. Apart from the summer house, no major obstacles to wheelchair access were found. | |
| 31. All members of staff were found to be courteous and helpful. | |
| 32. However, the entire site would not be navigable to an unsighted or unescorted visitor with visual impairments. | A |
| 33. The visitor centre had plenty of space in its entrance area, but that presented a daunting open area for a visually impaired person. The light walls, white interiors, the dominance of the glass walls and doors, and collection of muted colours provided no structure or comfort zones for VIPs. Colour contrasting is strongly recommended. | A |

<p>34. There was no easily identifiable route to the admission area. The lack of tactile signs meant that it would be impossible for a visually impaired visitor to find a toilet.</p>	<p>A</p>
<p>35. The signing of the toilet facilities should be enhanced with the provision of tactile labels.</p>	<p>A</p>
<p>36. The lack of general navigation signs in an accessible form was also noted.</p>	<p>A</p>
<p>37. The lack of signing of the conference room should be remedied.</p>	<p>A</p>
<p>38. The production of a tactile map and audio guide would help visitors immensely once in the garden.</p>	<p>C/D</p>
<p>39. Providing tactile signs at waist height as way markers would not be too intrusive to the aesthetic value of the visitor centre or gardens.</p>	<p>B</p>
<p>40. A ramped entrance section to the Summer House would enable wheelchair users to enjoy its shelter.</p>	<p>B</p>
<p>41. Could consideration be given to enhancing the facilities for cyclists? Secure locker storage for clothes near the toilets might be appreciated.</p>	<p>D</p>